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 \cmc\June 17, 1991

Notes on Beschloss, The Crisis Years

MRB (Michael R. Beschloss) ascribes great influence to my Gilpatric speech, though he has origins of it wrong. (Given true origins, implication is that I played a significant role in triggering Missile Crisis, by humiliating and provoking Khrushchev. Though: what √
 have happened otherwise on Berlin, without Gilpatric speech? Would Berlin challenge have been postponed anyway? What √
 K's intentions on Berlin in 1962?

i
 Moves on Cuba in 1962 certainly looked like prelude to invasion. Are not McN's and McG's denials of any such intention or √
 possibility
 disingenuous? Certainly the desire or intention to overthrow Castro was there; and EGL warned that invasion would be necessary; and preparations were directed in the fall.

i
 Inhibition on invasion: countermove on Berlin, √
 a fear of
 a "Vietnam." 378
 Private fear on Berlin at time of Cuba I, 383.
 i
 Pres link of Cuba to Berlin: (or Iran, ME, Laos): 379

i
 Question: Given that K was in no real danger of losing his job in 1962: How √
 he have stood if he had "lost Cuba"? (I've never seen this addressed!)

i
 Also: his failure to expel West from Berlin after four years

of "ostentatous trying threatened to turn him into a joke among the Soviet leadership and people." 380 Danger of more "frustration and embarrassment".

i
MRB makes my point for the first time in print 383 that K expected that JCK might conceal the news of the missiles till after the election; that this had some basis, on past performance. [I presume he still doesn't know about PSALM.] also, 392

i
414: Keating and Repubs charged
in September that JFK was concealing the evidence (this is what McG was denying, falsely, on October 14).
didn't find it a totally improbable notion!
This is what I conjecture K expected JFK to do.

i
Republicans were demanding a blockade; this supports K's and Gromyko's beliefs that open announcement would have led to a blockade. And it makes McN's recommendation more understandable; anyway, there was a Presidential directive to do blockade (and invasion) planning around this time.

i
Presidential authorization from Congress for a reserve callTMup clearly foreshadowed possibility of invasion: against buildup.
415

i
[BIG ISSUE OF 1961-62: CONVINCING K THAT JFK WOULD USE FU OVER BERLIN! (And creating uncertainty over...Laos!) 417: McCone was afraid K was not convinced. But Berlin speech and buildup; SatEvePost Alsop interview; Nuc buildup; Ann arbor speech; Gilpatric speech {see how much I was a part of, and contributed to, this campaign, even though I didn't believe in it!}; eventually, Cuba II, after Turkish and Greek IRBMs were finally installed, under JFK: april, october 1962!

i
K WAS DOING THE SAME: A FU THREAT FOR DEFENSE OF CUBA (BY MISSILES THE US CALLED "DEFENSIVE" IN turkey.)

420 Did JFK warning about "offensive weapons" such as "offensive ground-to-ground missiles" really worded to include II-28s, etc.,

and weapons other than missiles suggest to wishful Soviets in the know that JFK was going to allow them to claim that their missiles were defensive, like ours in Turkey? Is that why the warning did not scare them?

i
421: Dob assurance on no embarrassment prior to elections; see my hypothesis that this was to encourage JFK to keep the secret, if he found out, till after the elections.

i
Yipes! MRB has this hypothesis: he √
have gotten it from
Mikoyan, i.e., from me!

i
FA, FMA: 384. Secrecy and deception not only cause humiliation and rage in the leader who was fooled; they cause fear, uncertainty, a sense of aggression and inference of bad conscience and intention in the actor; all of which justify the enraged response, reduce its political costs and risks.

i
MRB also has factor of JFK's being furious at being deceived; and K;'s failure to foresee this.

i
Also: Fait accompli as the only way to accomplish goal; as in Berlin Wall; "not irrational." 385 Gromyko: 392

i
FURTHER OF MY THESES:

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426: K may have hoped to avoid being guilty of deliberate lie (Bolshakov...). Or believed JFK would accept it, or be encouraged to defer crisis till after the November elections.

i
(Could MRB have gotten any of these hypotheses from Sergo Mikoyan, who got them from me?!) He interviewed Mikoyan: when?

i
Like Garthoff, MRB goes to lengths 386-87 to argue that Sergo Mikoyan is wrong to put the defense of Cuba first among motives, rather than righting the strategic balance (which all US analysts,

ignorant of Mongoose and invasion plans, assumed earlier was the only real reason). Clinging to this earlier explanation: downplays the fact of US covert aggression and preparations for open aggression; downplays the effect of this on Soviet actions, reducing K's irrationality (and supposed "aggression," both of which justify JFK's risk-taking and US support of it; avoids admitting that US analysts were wrong earlier (why should MRB care? Garthoff is another matter); discounts JFK's responsibility for the whole crisis: i.e., for what led up to it and stimulated the Soviet action, as well as for choosing to respond to it as a crisis and taking risky, provocative actions.

i
K's action is always taken as paradoxical, wildly reckless, irrational; MRB is first to present (my) thesis that it was not, entirely.

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391: Another DE thesis: that secrecy (of FA) prevented K from getting wide range of feedback from his own advisors. (Like JFK in Cuba I!)

i
393: If Gilpatric speech, and Alsop interview were so provocative, what about Ann Arbor speech! (I worked on that, too, though I warned against it: but I wasn't worried about the effect on K or the Soviet Union! since they were so far behind, what could they do?!)

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398: Cuban warning against *Fait Accompli*; on grounds that deception would call for violent reaction!

i
Also they warned against US preemptive attack if missiles discovered before they were combat ready. [SO K WAS NOT UNAWARE OF THIS ARGUMENT; HE HAD HEARD IT. K said he would send a letter in this case; evidently, he felt sure that if JFK did discover them, he would ✓
do what Acheson and others preferred, launch a surprise attack [possibly wrong: an unforeseen risk!]

i
But no one seems ever to raised the question (nor does MRB): What if the invasion were planned before November, when K planned to reveal the missiles, and later planned to announce the security

pact with Cuba? What if the Soviet buildup itself ✓
triggered

the
invasion, or speeded it up? The buildup was almost certain to
produce pressures to do that! No one, even Gromyko, seems to have
foreseen the latter phenomenon which was quite visible by August,
even before the missiles went in, and certainly soon after the
missiles went in yet there is no evidence that any of the Soviets
worried about this either before the event or during the deployment
phase, despite the huge controversy in the US!

i
Note that the maneuvers planned by the US could have screened
an invasion before the election!

i
of Soviet concern about this before September, or
between September and October, could be taken as evidence against
their whole claim that they were worried about an invasion of Cuba,
which only missiles could deter; it would be consistent with the
traditional US analysis that this was only a cover story for
changing the strategic balance, and that they thought an invasion
of Cuba was out of the question, even with the provocation of a
Soviet buildup. But I don't believe that (and advocates of the
latter hypothesis have never thought of this argument). How, then,
is it to be explained: for those few Soviets, and Cubans, who were
aware of the missile deployment: especially after the controversy
in the US, and the pressure for invasion, actually built up?!

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399: Bolshakov, K warn JFK of the danger of reigniting Berlin
Crisis in June and July: in order to link Cuba and Berlin in JFK's
mind, later?

[MRB MISSES:

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Invasion regarded as necessary by Mongoose planning.
see 375-78.

i
Above point about Soviet expectations: What if invasion
earlier than November?

i
Ann Arbor speech: even in discussing McN, June 1962! 406-07; even in discussing K's
response to the Ann Arbor speech!
Amazing omission considering his emphasis on Gilpatric speech!

i
 hsr memos of August 23 and September 6, on SAMS, SSMS, and possible warnings. see 437, 420

i
 Actual reactions of ExComm members on first hearing the news. (He reports Bohlen's finding the President absolutely determined that the missiles would leave Cuba: morning of Oct 16).

i
 Planning for invasion, in September and October! (Despite Diplomatic History piece.) 433

i
 Why secret couldn't be kept for longer than a week (435)©™even with PSALM! Hence: why Khrushchev was wrong!
 (Missiles were discovered too soon before election: for √ this kind of secret to be kept, especially by McCone.)

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 Scale of Mongoose; nature of aggression; US policy with respect to Cuba as aggression.

i
 NITZE NOTES: hence, McN and T comments on Wednesday, Oct. 17. (Compare "official record.")

i
 JFK asks RFK to bring ExComm behind blockade, on Thursday (or Friday? 459) morning. (Thus, JFK's "own leanings" 453 (dove, not hawk).)

i
 NITZE NOTES: JFK readiness to trade on Turkey √, after blockade begun.

i
 420: JFK commitments of September as crucial to the crisis; it made it inevitable that there would be a crisis (since missiles were already there!). So the reasoning as to why there should be such a warning/commitment just then©©not earlier©©was crucial! See Sorensen's explanation. But why was not the hsr memo of August 23 the basis for a warning, private or public? [Hypothesis: at that point, they didn't know what they wanted to say about SAMs! They didn't want to encourage them; or forbid them.] [Similar reasoning for the "ambiguous" wording about "offensive weapons" later] note foresight that Sovs might describe both kinds of weapons as "defensive."

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 438: JFK warning "had the effect of foreclosing any

presidential action if missiles were found in Cuba short of risking nuclear war." i.e., as by quick, limited air strike, or by blockade ✓
 or by ultimatum^f
 (even though air strike was not inevitable, nor invasion).

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 Hyp: Contrary to Sorensen emphasis that JFK was almost sure SU would not put missiles there, and contrary to McN and McG that no invasion was desired: we know that JFK ✓
 contemplating, soon
 after, invasion (even before knowing of missiles); might not he have thought the warnings would provide a good justification for invasion (✓
 granted, he wasn't so eager as of September to invade^{©™}perhaps, because of the buildup by that time^{©©}that he was willing
 to take the buildup as of that time, or the prospective buildup short of missiles^{©©}as the excuse to invade, i.e., to carry out the Mongoose proposals. How does this relate to the October 1 directive?^f
 How does Hershberg explain, given the Mongoose planning, that JFK chose to limit the warning in September to offensive weapons? Did his thinking change between early 1962 and September; and again, between September 13 and October 1?

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 Why an hsr memo on a statement on September 6? Wasn't the first JFK statement earlier, on the 4th or 5th? Was this afterwards? If so, was it just addressed to the desirability of a direct threat?

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 424: Did CIA estimators in ONE know of Mongoose? I think not. (Garthoff says not). ✓
 But McCone did: couldn't that have been a reason why he foresaw possibility of missiles?^f
 Fait Accomplis:

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 435: Dillon argues for a quick, surprise air strike as a Fait Accompli: less provocative of a response than an announced attack or warning.

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 459: Friday, Oct. 19: Bundy favored air strike as a fait accompli. He now favored "decisive action with its advantages of

surprise and confronting the world with a fait accompli." (Avoid tempting the other to make a commitment like JFK's in September, when he had been given too much warning, without making it clear that K was committed! And gain tactical advantages of surprise. And keep rest of world from taking the wrong side.) (On the other hand, a violent fait accompli, like this, has its dangers even if the other has not been deceived, has not made predictions which this will falsify, or commitments which this will trigger. It can compel a response, just as defiance of a warning or commitment may do.)

✓
MRB BIAS: f
Dismissal of invasion intention.

i
Dismissal of Tojo/Pearl Harbor analogy: i.e., legitimacy of US air strike assumed (ignoring SU move as response to aggression and plans for bigger aggression). 436

i
Question: Why did JFK feel safe in issuing warnings in September? MRB: because he felt certain K would not be so reckless as to put missiles in. 438. But was he that certain? And if so, on what basis? Hyp: on basis of his understanding of the assurances he had been given (even though they were, in fact, deliberately ambiguous); his sense of a shared understanding with K: he wouldn't do that to me; he is a "man of the world," a state leader, he wouldn't humiliate me that much, not only because it would be dangerous, but because we are buddies, we have to take care of each other...

i
Moreover: it may not have been, as Sorensen suggests (?) that JFK thought it nearly impossible/negligibly likely that K would put missiles in, so that the warning had nothing to do with influencing the SU, only with influencing public opinion. Rather, he may have thought it fairly or quite unlikely that K would do it, but ✓

still significantly possible
 (in view of McCone and his analyses) that he would, if not warned; but that it was virtually impossible
 if he did warn K
 No one warned
 and JFK did not consider that missiles might already be in Cuba (by September 13) or on their way (by September 4) (the first arrived on September 8)
 . Just as K never seems to have considered that an invasion might have been planned for an October 20 deadline!

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 443: Pres, Oct 16: Last month I should have said that we're, that we don't care... (like McN's advice; like McN's first reaction on Oct 16, morning. Like Sorensen).
 "The issue" was the too late warning/commitment. NOTE THE RISKS OF THREATENING!

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 455: No one suggested: Blockade, then ultimatum (the course followed; and accepted by K!) prior to Oct 22, or even Oct. 27.
 No one suggested it as an option, or that it might work. (Actual, "cheap, quick and total success" was totally unforeseen both in Cuba and in Iraq!) (Just as no one foresaw except Air Force; maybe Luttwak? foresaw that a bombing attack alone would be sufficient against Iraq).

i
 For 28 years Presidents Johnson, Nixon, Ford, (Carter? maybe not), Reagan and Bush have dreamed of having their Cuban Missile Crisis; and Bush got it! (He got credit for winning the SU to his side, to offset the fact that the victory was not won over the SU; the dangers faced down did not include nuclear war, but they were quite big enough).

457: On October 18, Kennedy told Gromyko that he had "no plans to attack Cuba" and said that he was "restraining those circles that support an invasion....I am trying to prevent any actions that could lead to war."

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Who was the liar? Aside from the fact that ✓
 that day *f*
 and for
 the previous two days, the President was presiding over urgent
 discussion of and planning and preparing for possible airstrike or
 invasion within a week or two©©in response to the Soviet missiles,
 but without any legal justification©©he was concealing the fact
 that he had ordered all preparations for invasion, as of October
 1, to be complete by a deadline of October 20, two days off! And,
 of course, he ✓
 been attacking Cuba all year!
 (Two Americans present, Thompson and Martin Hillebrand, probably
 knew none of the latter two facts.)

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